

## Message Text

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73 L

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01 PRS-01

DRC-01 /094 W

----- 064137

R 171859Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9244

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12090

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UR, FR

SUBJECT: SOVIET EMBASSY PROTESTS REMARKS OF GISCARD  
LIEUTENANT

REF: PARIS 11319 (LIMDIS)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE FRENCH PRESS HAS GIVEN BROAD  
COVERAGE TO A SOVIET EMBASSY PROTEST TO THE QUAI OF  
STATEMENTS MADE BY GISCARD'S CLOSE ASSOCIATE AND MINISTER  
OF PUBLIC HEALTH MICHEL PONIATOWSKI. THE PROTEST WHICH  
CHARACTERIZED REMARKS BY PONIATOWSKI ON TV THE 15TH AS  
"AN UNFRIENDLY ACT TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION," MAY WELL  
HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO PLACATE THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS,  
WHO HAD EARLIER PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEIR IRE OVER THE  
SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON GISCARD (REFTEL). END  
SUMMARY.

2. THE EVENING OF MAY 15, FRENCH MINISTER OF PUBLIC  
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HEALTH MICHEL PONIATOWSKI READ A STATEMENT ON TV

DESCRIBING THE DANGERS FOR FRANCE OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN A MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT. AFTER DECLARING THE PCF TO BE IN THE PAY OF THE SOVIETS, HE CHARGED THAT ALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES UNDER COMMUNIST REGIMES WERE OCCUPIED BY SOVIET TROOPS AND DENIED BASIC FREEDOMS, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF POLITICAL CHANGE. ALTHOUGH PONIATOWSKI'S STATEMENT ITSELF WAS LARGELY IGNORED IN FRENCH PRESS, PCF REACTED QUICKLY, ISSUING INTERIM REPLY FOLLOWED BY FORCEFUL REBUTTAL IN WHICH MARCHAIS ACCUSED PONIATOWSKI OF ABUSING HIS OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS AND OF TRYING TO DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM PUBLICATION OF THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 1975 ISSUED BY GISCARD'S MINISTRY. HE ACCUSED PONIATOWSKI OF RESORTING TO "THE OLD HITLERITE CALUMNY THAT COMMUNISTS ARE NOT FRENCH."

3. THE SOVIET EMBASSY DEMARCHE WAS DELIVERED AT A FAIRLY JUNIOR LEVEL BY VLADIMIR STUPICHIN, THE COUNSELLOR FOR EXTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, WE ARE TOLD BY AN AFP SOURCE, THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY CALLED UP FRENCH JOURNALISTS AND READ THEM THE TEXT OVER THE PHONE. THE STORY APPEARED IN ALL MAJOR PARIS DAILIES OF MAY 17. ACCORDING TO THE AFP ACCOUNT, THE OPERATIVE PART CHARACTERIZED PONIATOWSKI'S STATEMENT AS "AN UNFRIENDLY ACT TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AND IN CONTRADICTION WITH THE SPIRIT OF RELATIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES."

4. COMMENT. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, GISCARD HIMSELF HAS REFRAINED FROM EXPLOITING THE SOVIET MENACE THEME, AND, ALTHOUGH HIS FOLLOWERS HAVE NOT HESITATED TO HARP ON THE EVILS OF COMMUNISTS IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, EVEN THEY HAD GENERALLY AVOIDED EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO THE SOVIET UNION PRIOR TO PONIATOWSKI'S APPEARANCE. AS NOTED REFTEL, THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE HAS TOLD US THAT AMBASSADOR CHERVONENKO RECEIVED ASSURANCES FROM ALL THREE MAJOR CANDIDATES BEFORE THE FIRST ROUND THAT THE TONE AND CONTENT OF FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS WOULD BE PRESERVED. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN OBVIOUSLY FOLLOWING GISCARD'S CAMPAIGN CLOSELY FOR SIGNS OF ANTI-SOVIETISM, AND ACCORDING TO A POLISH FIRST SECRETARY AND CONFIDENTIAL

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A YUGOSLAV COUNSELLOR HERE, THE PURPOSE OF AMBASSADOR CHERVONENKO'S CALL ON GISCARD MAY 7 WAS TO APPEAL FOR HIM NOT TO ALLOW ATTACKS ON THE USSR DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

THE SOVIETS ARE CLEARLY SUSPICIOUS OF SOME OF GISCARD'S ALLIES, ESPECIALLY LECANUET, WHO WE NOTE WAS THE SUBJECT OF RADIO MOSCOW'S CRITICISM SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. HOWEVER, IT REMAINS HIGHLY UNCERTAIN WHETHER THEY WOULD PREFER

A MITTERRAND VICTORY, GIVEN THEIR STRAINED RELATIONS WITH HIM OVER THE YEARS AND THE EXCELLENT RELATIONS WHICH MOSCOW HAS ENJOYED WITH A SUCCESSION OF FIFTH REPUBLIC GOVERNMENTS.

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5. THE GENERAL SOVIET POSTURE DURING THE ELECTION HAS APPEARED TO BE ONE OF COVERING ALL THE BASES. DURING PODGORNÝ'S VISIT TO ATTEND PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S FUNERAL, HE MET WITH FRENCH LEADERS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. MITTERRAND WAS INVITED TO LUNCH WITH AMBASSADOR CHERVONENKO AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN, AND NO SOONER HAD GISCARD EMERGED AS THE FAVORITE AFTER THE FIRST ROUND THAN THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR PAID HIS WELL-PUBLISHED CALL ON HIM. WHILE THE SOVIET DCM HAS CLAIMED TO US THAT THIS CALL WAS SIMPLY TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS

FROM MOSCOW PERTAINING TO ECONOMIC MATTERS, AND THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR FINALLY WENT THROUGH WITH IT ONLY WHEN ADVISED THAT THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN FOR THE SECOND ROUND HAD NOT OFFICIALLY BEGUN, WE HAVE IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT IT WAS THE SOVIET EMBASSY WHICH DRUMMED UP PUBLICITY FOR THE VISIT.

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6. THE PCF'S ANGRY REACTION TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON GISCARD APPEARS MORE AND MORE TO HAVE BEEN GENUINE. TRUE, IT ALLOWED THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW, AND THIS MAY HAVE HELPED MITTERRAND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS. NEVERTHELESS, TO THE PCF, THE SOVIET MOVE UNDOUBTEDLY HAD THE EARMARKS OF ONE DESIGNED TO PROTECT SOVIET

STATE INTERESTS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PCF. PONIATOWSKI'S STATEMENT WAS A HARSH ONE AND WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO IGNORE IN ANY CASE. HOWEVER, CHANCES ARE THAT THE SOVIETS SAW IT AS PROVIDING A CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY TO RIGHT THE BALANCE BY MAKING A PROTEST THAT PARALLELED THE ONE MADE BY PCF GENERAL SECRETARY. THE FACT THAT THE LATEST POLL HAD SHOWN MITTERRAND IN A DEAD HEAT WITH GISCARD MAY HAVE HAD NO LITTLE INFLUENCE ON SOVIET THINKING. AS A RESULT OF THEIR DEMARCHE, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY HOPE THAT THEY HAVE NEUTRALIZED THEIR FORAYS INTO THE FRENCH ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THEY HAVE ONLY SUCCEEDED IN IRRITATING ALL SIDES.

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